

The President's Radio Address

December 6, 2003

Good morning. This week we received additional reports that America's economy is gaining strength.

In November, our Nation added 57,000 new jobs, and the unemployment rate fell to 5.9 percent. In the past 4 months, 328,000 Americans started work at new jobs.

In the third quarter of 2003, worker productivity rose at a 9.4 percent annual rate, the fastest pace since 1983. Rising productivity means rising wages, and productivity gains help companies keep prices low, which allows American families to stretch their paychecks further.

Other economic signs are positive. Surveys show manufacturing activity to be at its strongest level in 20 years. Automobile sales rose in November. Home construction continues to expand.

During this season, America's families are planning for the year ahead, and they have reason to be optimistic. The American economy continues on a solid path of recovery. With strong sales and improving profits, companies will continue to hire new workers in the coming year. And because of tax relief, all workers will get to keep more of what they earn, and small businesses will be able to create more jobs.

Since 2001, we have cut taxes for everyone who pays income taxes. We reduced the marriage penalty in our Tax Code. We raised the child credit to \$1,000 per child, and we have reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains. This tax relief is critical because it keeps more money in the hands of workers and small-business owners and others who move this economy forward.

Here in Washington, our responsibility is to make sure this economy keeps its momentum, and I will not be satisfied until every person who wants to work can find a job. I have proposed a six-point plan to strengthen this recovery and bring prosperity to every corner of America. In the coming months, I will continue to work with Congress to achieve these important measures.

First, businesses are more likely to hire people if health care for workers is afford-

able. We need to allow small-business owners to join together in association health plans, giving them the purchasing power of large companies when they shop for health insurance. And we must reform the medical liability system so that health care dollars serve the interest of patients, not the interests of trial lawyers.

Second, we need broad legal reforms so frivolous lawsuits don't put good companies out of business and good people out of work. The Congress should start by enacting class action reform.

Third, we must reduce unnecessary Government regulation and redtape, so businesses can focus on consumers and customers, not on filing out paperwork.

Fourth, Congress should enact a national energy policy so that businesses and farms and homeowners can count on a reliable and affordable supply of energy and our Nation is less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Fifth, my administration is pursuing free and fair trade agreements so that our products and services can reach new markets and new customers overseas.

Sixth, we should make all the tax relief we have passed permanent. The tax relief is scheduled to phase out in coming years if Congress does not take action. Tax relief set our economy on the right track, and permanent tax relief will keep it on the right track.

By moving forward on this agenda, we can build on the great progress our economy is making. With the confidence and hard work of the American people and with the right policies in Washington, there are even brighter days ahead for the American economy.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:58 a.m. on December 5 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 5 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the Kennedy Center Honors Reception

December 7, 2003

Thank you all very much. Good evening, and welcome to the White House. Laura and I are pleased to have you all here, and we are so honored to be a part of this annual tradition. We especially welcome the 2003 Kennedy Center honorees and their family and their friends.

Every year, the Kennedy Center pays tribute to five outstanding artists. Each group of honorees is an interesting mix. *[Laughter]* This year, for example, we have a director whose best films are known to all. We have an actress who has created characters we all remember, who, I'm told, still does a mighty good Tarzan yell. *[Laughter]* And the three musicians with us are among the most recognized in the world. They're not known to have performed together—*[laughter]*—but the sight of all three on the same stage is a picture to remember.

The Kennedy Center Honors recognize great contributions to American culture. Each of the honorees is here because of their hard effort and superior performance through an entire career.

Only one honoree was born in Texas. *[Laughter]* That person is Carol Burnett, who spent her early years in San Antonio. Young Carol went off into the world, and the world took a liking to her from the start. She is today one of the most recognized and warmly regarded entertainers in America.

For her first performance in acting class at UCLA, the teacher gave Carol Burnett a "D-". *[Laughter]* But Carol found, as have I—*[laughter]*—that one bad grade or two—*[laughter]*—is not the end of the road. *[Laughter]*

By the end of her freshman year, she was named "Most Outstanding Newcomer." Within a few years, she became a star on Broadway and a television favorite on the Winchell-Mahoney Show and the Garry Moore Show. In the sixties and seventies, Carol's own variety show ran 11 years and received more than 20 Emmys. Every week, Carol performed one of the most difficult feats in all of show business, playing it straight with Tim Conway. *[Laughter]*

To this day, millions of Americans can instantly recall sketches and characters from the Carol Burnett Show. Whether she was playing Eunice or the Scrub Woman or Starlett O'Hara in "Went With The Wind"—*[laughter]*—viewers could always sense the person behind the character, the sweetness, the sincerity, and the wonderful spirit of Carol Burnett.

Through the years in such performances as "Same Time Next Year," Carol has also shown the depth and range of her talent. In her good life, she has been a beloved entertainer, a devoted mom, and a faithful friend. She is a cheerful and graceful presence in American life, and America honors Carol Burnett.

All great performances in front of a camera involve an artistic vision behind the camera, and few have spent more years at the top of the directing profession than Mike Nichols. His name on a production signifies quality, intelligence, and high artistic standards. His credits include some of the most memorable films of the last two generations. "The Graduate" was a hit movie and a triumph that has held up over time.

The best directors are always extending themselves, and Mike Nichols has turned his gifts to films as varied as "Catch-22," "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and "Working Girl."

He is equally respected for his career on Broadway, first as a performer, then as director of the original "Odd Couple" and "Barefoot in the Park." The medal Mike Nichols wears this evening is the latest in a collection of other well-deserved honors, including the Oscar, the Emmy, the Tony, and the Grammy.

A movie critic once said that Mike Nichols' greatest talent may be his ability to bring out the best in performers, and that is another reason why Mike Nichols is among the finest.

Mike has summed up his career this way: "I have been in love with movies all my life. Directing them is like getting to marry this girl you followed around for years and years." I don't know how long he followed around Diane Sawyer—*[laughter]*—but she is here to share in this very proud moment.

And Mike's parents, who brought their little boy to America from Nazi Germany,